

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Survey No. B-4765

1. Name

Historic 503 – 521 South Durham Street
and / common

2. Location

street & number 503 – 521 South Durham Street
city, town Baltimore
state & zip code Maryland 21231 county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name
street & number
city, town state & zip code telephone

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Land Records liber
street & number Clarence Mitchell Courthouse folio
city, town Baltimore State Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title
date federal state county local
depository for survey records
city, town state & zip code

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7. Description

Condition		Check One	Check One
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	X original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	X altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved:
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date of move: _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This group of nine two-bay-wide, two-and-a-half story brick houses with gable roofs and dormer windows with broken pediments are typical of the small groups of two-and-a-half story, Federal-style houses built in Baltimore in the 1820s. This particular row is also quite typical of the ways in which the older rowhouses in Baltimore have been "improved" over the years, with either formstone or a sensitive restoration, reflecting the different tastes of different owners.

The houses are two-and-a-half stories in height, but range in width and lot sizes. 503-558 are quite wide—at 21' and 20'6", respectively--and occupy lots 61' deep. 507-511 are 15' wide on 58' lots; 513-517 are 10' wide on 58' lots; and 519-521 are 12'2" and 9'10", respectively, on 60' lots. Each house is two rooms deep with a one-story brick rear kitchen addition somewhat narrower than the house. Because early house lots in Baltimore were laid out back to back, without rear service alleys, the only entrance to the backyard is through the sallyport located in the center of pairs. 515-517 had their original gabled roof masked with a tall formstone façade; 519-521 had their roof raised to a full three stories in height.

The houses were probably constructed in running bond and were originally painted, but all have since been covered with formstone. The pitched gable roofs are covered with modern asphalt shingles overtop the original cedar shakes. A simple corbelled brick cornice runs across the façade beneath the formstone covering. Double-flued chimney stacks rise at the peak of the gable roofs. Each house also has a chimney at the rear of the kitchen addition.

All original door and window openings have been obscured by the formstone covering but it appears that some had segmental brick lintels while others had flat wood lintels and sills. The window openings are filled with replacement 1/1 or 6/6 sash. A variety of replacement door types have been used and no original doors remain. The houses sit on low basements, the entrances being reached by one or two concrete or brick steps. An arched or flat sallyport runs between each pair of houses.

The houses are two rooms deep, with the front room being entered directly from the front door. The front and back rooms of the first floor are separated by a wide opening, with the tightly winding, narrow stairs set in the rear room, in the space between the partition wall and the fireplace. The one-story rear addition served as the kitchen, with its own cooking fireplace. There are two bedrooms on the second floor of the main part of the house, each with a fireplace, and a third room in the dormer story.

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8. Significance

Period	Area of significance	check one & justify			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theatre	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other: specify	

Specific dates c. 1820

Builder/Architect

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This group of houses is significant as being representative of the common form of two-and-a-half story houses built in the oldest sections of Baltimore in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. By the later 1820s and the 1830s, builders more often constructed longer rows of houses as speculative ventures, but at the beginning of the century pairs, involving less risk and less initial capital, were the rule. The houses do not differ markedly from the two-and-a-half story houses built on nearby main streets—they are simply somewhat narrower and smaller versions priced to serve less affluent residents of the old walking city.

These particular houses were built at a time when Fells Point was already an important ship building center for the growing town of Baltimore. Early occupants included people involved in the maritime trades, small-scale craftsmen, and laborers who made their homes in the smaller scale and more affordable housing located on the small "alley" streets of Fells Point. Until about 1850 Durham Street was known as Happy Alley and its occupants were racially mixed.

The houses are especially significant as being located in the oldest part of Fells Point, only a few blocks from the water, and represent an integral part of the history of this National Register district. Slated for demolition in the 1960s as part of the planned East-West highway connection existing segments of I-95 to the north and south of the city, these houses were saved by local preservation activists who created the Fells Point National Register District in 1969.

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9. Major Bibliographic References

Mary Ellen Hayward and Charles Belfoure, *The Baltimore Rowhouse*
(New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999)

10. Geographic Data

Acreage of nominated property

Quadrangle name

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared by

name / title Dr. Mary Ellen Hayward

Organization The Alley House Project

date

street & number 1306 Carrollton Ave.

telephone

city, town Baltimore

state & zip code Maryland 21204

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Maryland, Article 41, section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of rights.

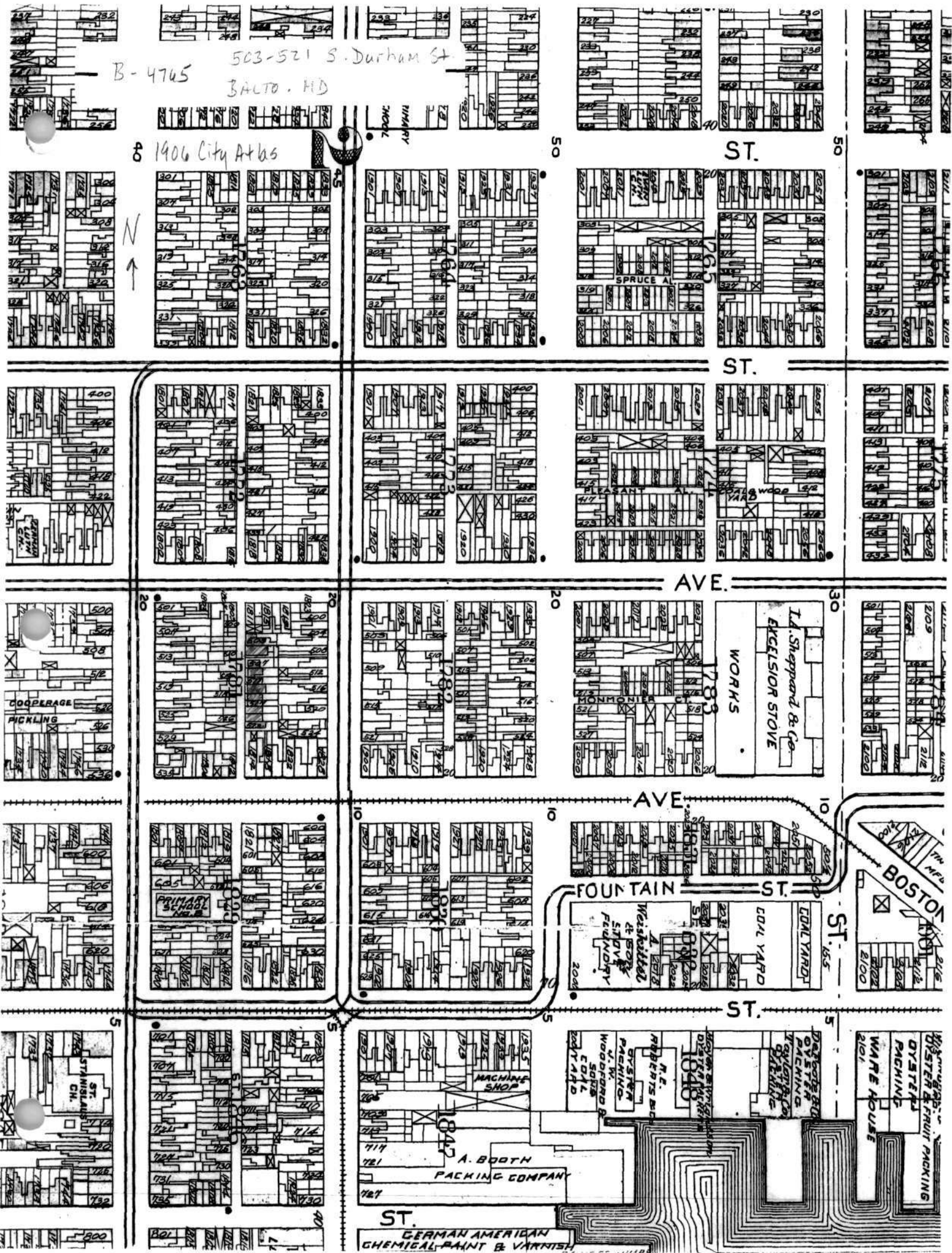
Return to:
DHCP/DHCD
Maryland Historical Trust
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032-2023

B-4765

503-521 S. Durham St
BALTO. MD

1906 City Atlas

N
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503 S. Durham

FD6

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503-521 S. Durham St.

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C. Belfrage

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MD SAPD

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505-513 S. Durham

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503-521 S. Durham St.

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C. Behrman

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303

505 S. Durham

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505 S. Durham St.

BALTO. MD.

C. Belmonte

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515-517 S. Durham

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503-521 S. Durham St.

BALTO. MD

C. Belfrage

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519-521 S Durham

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503-521 S. Durham St.

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